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[Examining links between health, wellbeing and social isolation: findings from a survey conducted using community-based participatory research.](#)

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TITLE: **Examining links between health, wellbeing and social isolation: findings from a survey conducted using community-based participatory research**

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Background:

Community-based participatory research (CBPR) involves researchers, practitioners and community members working together to increase knowledge, foster social capital, and improve health and wellbeing. This study utilised a CPBR approach to develop, pilot and conduct a community wellbeing survey in a town characterised by a number of health and social issues. The intention was that the results could be used by the partners to design services and activities to better meet local needs.

Methods:

An initial survey was developed with input from a steering group comprised of local authority, NHS and third sector partners. A group of residents then pre-tested the questions, as well as providing suggestions on ways to maximise the response rate. Eleven volunteers were trained to pilot and deliver the final survey, which could be completed in person or online. A link to the online survey was distributed to a mailing list of around 400 residents, via social media sites and flyers in GP practices. Responses to closed questions were analysed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS v.20, while responses to open-ended questions were analysed using a combination of thematic and framework analysis.

Results:

233 surveys were completed. Respondents were aged between 17 and 87 (mean = 47 years) and 65.7% were female. 46.2% identified themselves as having a longstanding illness, disability or infirmity and 30.7% reported feeling isolated from others at times. Those with lower levels of self-reported health – assessed using the EQ-5D health thermometer – were more likely to report feeling socially isolated ($p=0.002$) and less likely to report feeling that things in their lives were worthwhile ($p=0.001$). On average, respondents reported lower levels of personal wellbeing – assessed using the ONS4 questions – in comparison with averages for the UK as a whole. However, the majority indicated that they enjoyed living in the town (83.3%) and that they had friends or acquaintances in the area that they saw regularly (90.4%). Analysis of the free-text responses highlighted a strong sense of community spirit and pride, but that this could be under threat due to issues relating to housing, employment and crime.

Conclusion:

The results of this study indicate that personal wellbeing was strongly associated with both self-reported health and social isolation. They also suggest that CBPR may be an acceptable approach in

generating estimates of these population characteristics. This work constitutes part of a global trend to measure personal and societal wellbeing.

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